

SUBMISSION TO THE

Selection Committee on Recycling of Soft Plastics and Other Recyclable Material

8 September 2023

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INTRODUCTION

COTA SA welcomes the opportunity to comment on issues relating to the recycling of soft plastics and other recyclable materials as part of the inquiry being conducted by the Select Committee of the Legislative Council.

COTA SA is an older people's movement run by, for and with older people. We represent the rights, interests and futures of 700,000 older South Australians. We engage widely with older South Australians across the state, in person, via phone, email and through surveys. The lived experiences of the diverse community of older South Australians shape our policy and advocacy work.

COTA SA takes the threat of climate change seriously and our passionate Climate Change Group is focused on the actions that can be taken at a policy, organisational and personal level that tackle climate change.

Older South Australians have a deep commitment to reduce the severity and impact of climate change for today's community and for future generations. The adverse effect of climate change on the health of the community is evident in the rising cost of energy, heat and cold-related ill

health and extreme weather events. The impacts of climate change are disproportionately felt by those on low and fixed incomes and vulnerable community members, including a substantial proportion of older people, as they will have the least capacity to mitigate climate change and adapt to extreme weather conditions.

COTA SA's surveys show that the many older South Australians have a real desire to contribute to the prevention of, and adaptation to, climate change¹. Many older people are already active in their communities regarding sustainable living. They volunteer, they knock on doors, they plant trees, they recycle and reuse items, they contact elected representatives and they get involved in efforts to build a more sustainable future for all community members.

COTA SA views the issue of recycling soft plastics and related materials as one part of a suite of measures that can mitigate the impact of climate change and the wasteful use of resources and their embodied energy.

ISSUES

COTA SA makes the following comments for consideration:

Term of Reference (a) How South Australia has responded to REDcycle being unable to process soft plastics

Soft plastics are a common household item that currently cannot be placed in the yellow bin system. Over 80% of respondents in our recent survey with older South Australians are already reducing and recycling single use plastics. With recycling behaviour already second-nature, the REDcycle bin system was an easy next step for community members to limit soft plastics being sent landfill. Placing REDcycle bins in convenient locations, such as outside supermarkets, removed access barriers for people to adopt this new behaviour. Now that this service has been discontinued, it is likely that a higher percentage of soft plastics will enter landfill.

We support the prioritisation of soft plastic collection and recycling for community members, both for its direct value in terms of resource usage but also for its value as reinforcing behaviours that make progress on climate change.

Term of Reference (e) Examining strategies more broadly to reduce soft plastic waste generation and better management of commercial and residential waste.

The COTA SA community are starting to use the recently introduced service to recycle blister packs used for medications. This service enables community members to easily dispose of recyclables that cannot be recycled through the yellow bin system. Placing collection bins in

¹ [Climate Change • COTA SA](#)

locations that older people already frequent in their day to day remove access barriers for them to recycle blister packs, reducing the volume of waste entering landfill.

Several pharmacies around Adelaide provide collection boxes for the packs which are then sent to Sydney for processing by Pharmacycle². Whilst the aluminium content in the packs is valuable and helps to offset the cost of recycling, the environmental benefits could be more fully realised with a local recycling facility, thereby avoiding the carbon impact of regular transportation to an interstate site.

COTA SA recommends that the Select Committee considers the merit of recycling blister packs locally and encourages the Government to explore the feasibility of establishing a processing facility in South Australia.

Who is COTA SA?

COTA SA is an older people's movement run by, for and with older people. We represent the rights, interests and futures of 700,000 older South Australians. COTA SA reflects the diversity of modern ageing in terms of living arrangements, relationships, income, sexuality, culture, health, geography and aspirations. COTA SA connects with thousands of older people each year throughout SA. Our policy and advocacy are guided by the COTA SA Policy Council made up of older South Australians from a diverse range of backgrounds, along with a number of advisory groups. COTA SA's social enterprise, The Plug-in undertakes regular surveys with older South Australians in addition to its work facilitating access to older people for organisations, researchers and service providers. COTA SA is part of the COTA Federation with independent COTAs in each state and territory along with COTA Australia. The COTA Federation undertake regular State of the Older Nation surveys to understand the views, life experiences and needs of Australians aged 50+.

Acknowledgement of Country

COTA SA acknowledges and respects Aboriginal people as the traditional custodians of the land of South Australia. We honour Aboriginal peoples' continuing connection to Country and recognise that their sovereignty was never ceded. We pay our respects to First Nations Elders past, present and emerging and extend that respect to all Aboriginal people.

² https://www.pharmacycle.com.au/?gclid=EAlalQobChMIldWpypcf2gAMVvw97Bx3wtAhjEAAAYASAAEgKhZvD_BwE